

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are pending in the application. Independent claims 1 and 5 have been amended by the present amendment. The amendments are fully supported by the application as originally filed (see, e.g., specification at page 38, line 1 to page 39, last line).

Applicants' claimed invention is directed to an image processing device and method in which suspension of an invalidation or deletion operation to clear a data storing means is carried out while the invalidation is being performed (see, e.g., independent claims 1 and 5). For example, referring to FIG. 14 of the application, while a deletion operation is being carried out (steps S22 and S25), a request for suspension is made (step S26). Then, it is checked whether the user is a certified user (step S28), and the deletion operation is suspended only when it is confirmed that the user who made the request of suspension is a certified user (step S30).

As recited in the Applicants' claimed invention, an invalidation/deletion operation is normally prioritized over processing of image data, but because deletion of data in a hard disk takes a lot of time, suspension of an invalidation operation is permitted if the requesting user is a certified user, e.g., when it is necessary to urgently process the image data. Therefore, according to the claimed invention, both security protection and efficient processing of image data can be achieved (see, e.g., specification at page 27, lines 6-9; and page 38, line 1 to page 39, last line).

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,285,459 to Koakutsu et al. ("Koakutsu") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication US 2002/0032703 to Gassho et al. ("Gassho"), further in view of Japanese Publication 09-284572 to Rieko et al. ("Rieko"), further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication US 2001/0000360 to Shibata. Claims 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Koakutsu in view of Rieko, further in view of Shibata. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

On page 4, last full paragraph of the Office Action of 12/31/2007, it was admitted that the Koakutsu reference does not teach or suggest at least a "directing means for directing suspension of the invalidation performed by the image data invalidating means while the invalidation is being performed; and permitting means for permitting the suspension of the invalidation being performed ... after it is confirmed that a user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user."

On page 4, last two lines to page 5, first paragraph of the Office Action of 12/31/2007, the Gassho reference was cited allegedly for teaching the Applicants' claimed "directing means." However, there is no teaching or suggestion in Gassho that suspension of an invalidation/deletion operation is directed "while the invalidation is being performed" *as claimed*.

Referring to paragraphs 0081-0083 and FIG. 5 of Gassho, data from a printing job is either deleted from a hard disk (step S22) or not deleted from the hard disk (step S21). In Gassho, once the deletion of the printing job starts, it is not possible to suspend the deletion of the print job.

Referring to paragraphs 0115-0116 of Gassho, it is described that a decision of "whether printing job data is held in the hard disk" can be set in the printer for each printing job. However, there is no teaching or suggestion in Gassho of the Applicants' claimed suspension of an invalidation/deletion operation while the invalidation is being performed. For example, there is no teaching or suggestion that suspension can occur during/after step S22 in FIG. 5 of Gassho.

In Rieko, in step S405, a deletion suspension is carried out immediately after a deletion suspension request is made (step S402). In other words, there is no teaching or suggestion in Rieko of checking whether the "user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user," as recited in independent claims 1 and 5.

On page 6, first paragraph of the Office Action of 12/31/2007, the Shibata reference was cited at paragraphs 0066-0078 and 0085-0093 allegedly for teaching that suspension of an invalidation/deletion procedure is permitted "after it is confirmed that a user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user."

Shibata does not teach or suggest that an invalidation/deletion procedure can be suspended after the user is confirmed to be a certified user.

In the "super user mode" described in paragraphs 0071-0078 of Shibata, for example, "it is possible to cancel or output the print job data" (paragraph 0073).

In Shibata, correct entry of a password confirms the user's identity, and may allow printing or cancellation of a print job (see, e.g., paragraphs 0071-0078 of Shibata). However, there is no teaching or suggestion that the user is somehow permitted to suspend an invalidation/deletion that is already being performed.

There is simply no teaching or suggestion in the Shibata reference or the other cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, that when a user is confirmed as a certified user, the user can request suspension of an invalidation/deletion procedure being performed, which will result in "suspension of the invalidation being performed" *as claimed*.

It is believed the application is in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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